UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1991/NGO/47
4 March 1991

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
forty-seventh session
Agenda item 25

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE

Written statement submitted by Friends World Committee for Consultation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[4 March 1991]

Friends World Committee for Consultation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Conscientious objection to military service" contained in document E/CN.4/1991/64.

Friends World Committee for Consultation asks the Commission to:

1. Recognize that conscientious objection to military service derives from reasons of conscience or profound conviction arising from religious, ethical, moral or humanitarian, philosophical or similar motives;

2. Recognize the right of an individual to be released from the armed forces on grounds of conscience or profound conviction;

3. Request States to disseminate information about the right to conscientious objection to military service, particularly through youth organizations, and the Secretary-General should include the right to conscientious objection to military service in the United Nations public information activities, including the World Campaign for Human Rights;

4. Emphasize that alternative service should promote justice, peace, sustainable development and international understanding. Alternative service must never be punitive or used as a means of punishment;

5. Request the Secretary-General to update the information provided in the annexes of the Sub-Commission's report by Messrs. Eide and Mubango-Chipoya entitled "Conscientious objection to military service" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1983/30/Rev.1).

6. Quakers have, for more than 300 years, refused to participate in war, believing that it is wrong to kill or to train people to kill. This is a conviction held by many people of different religious faiths and beliefs. It is on these grounds that Quakers claim the right to conscientious objection to military service, not only for themselves but for all who share their pacifist beliefs.

7. Friends World Committee for Consultation which represents Quakers from around the world, welcomes resolution 1989/59 of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which "Recognizes the right of everyone to have conscientious objection to military service as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion ...".

8. In recent years there have been important advances in the recognition by many Member States of the United Nations of the right to conscientious objection, and the list of countries having or considering legislation continues to grow. However, not all States respect the right to conscientious objection to military service and hundreds of people are imprisoned or otherwise punished because of their principled objection to the taking of human life. More alarming are the frequent reports of forced conscription through kidnapping and street round-ups. Some of those forcibly recruited are young children under the age of conscription.